

# Valley Women's Voice

SEPTEMBER

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 7.

## Women Protest Discrimination

By Angela Giudice

The news of the recent firings of five women from the Florence Women In Construction Program (WICP) and the subsequent protests and legal proceedings has reached the women's community in bits and pieces. Until now, most women have been unsure about what precipitated the firings. In fact, the events leading up to and following the terminations form a confusing saga which, from the perspective of many project participants, calls into question both the intent and effectiveness of the WICP. In the following narrative of events, the names of the project participants have been withheld to insure their protection.

When the program began in late spring, the on-site administrator informed the project participants of the rules and regulations, and assured them that they would receive complete support from the administration throughout the training. However, several women protesting the policies and actions of the program contend that the rules were never made clear and that, in particular, the procedures for making complaints and filing grievances were ambiguous at best.

The Women in Construction Program was set up in response to federal legislation requiring that 5% of union membership be women by 1980. Yet many women expecting preparation for work in the construction trades told of incidents where the instructors (all men) blatantly discouraged the trainees from thinking that they would ever make it to an apprenticeship program, the first step in the union hierarchy. "We were set up to fail, I guess I would say now. We were constantly told that we were

either too short or too small or too old to ever get anywhere."

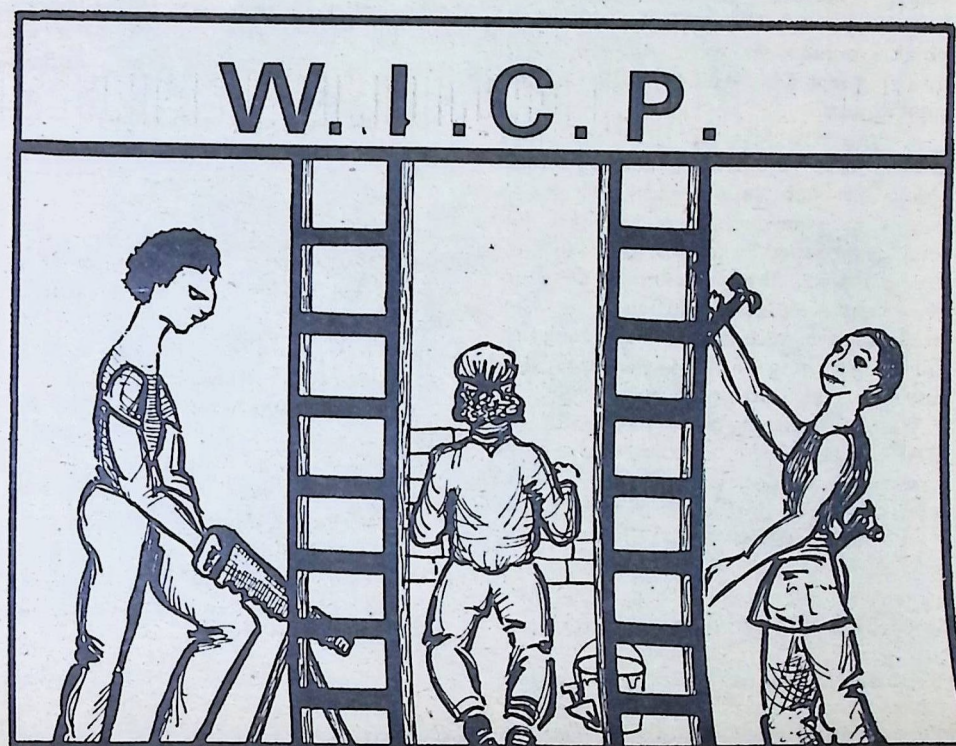
"One instructor told us outright that he never really wanted to see women in the field. He said that he would teach us anyway, but after a comment like that, you question what you're doing there to begin with."

The women involved in the legal action against WICP are charging the program of racism. Two women, one Black and the other Asian, were often subjected to racist comments and, on one occasion, an instructor referred to them as his "shit-house painters." "That's right, can you believe that," stated one of the women. "He came right out and called us shit-house painters. He said to us, and I mean this was happening a lot, he said to us, while we were painting in the men's bathroom, 'How's my shit-house painters.'"

Aside from blatant racist comments, this same woman, who was the first to be terminated from the program, maintains that the instructors did not want to teach her, openly told her that there was no room in the construction field for Black people, and eventually, after several incidents leading up to the firing, told her that he would make sure that she never found work in Western Mass.

Many of the women refer to times when the trainees were told that there was going to have to be some "ass-kissing" to make it in the trades. If they weren't willing to do that, then they should seriously consider whether or not they were "fit" for the job.

The first rumblings of dissatisfaction occurred early in the program. The majority of the trainees broke a rule at one point, and were told that if three women's names were submitted for disciplinary action, the



Graphic by Denny Maloney

rest of them would go unpunished. The women disagreed with this procedure and questioned the rationale behind the request. No resolution was ever reached. Questions of disciplinary procedures, mainly involving tardiness and seemingly indiscriminate enforcement of discipline and regulations, were repeatedly raised by the trainees.

Soon afterwards, these women who asked questions feel that they were labeled as "trouble-makers" and an attempt was made, by the staff and administration, to create the sense of "factions" within the program.

The next incident involved whether or not participants could post notices on a community bulletin board. According to the women interviewed, posters advertising women's events and a no-nukes rally were repeatedly removed from the bulletin board, although no one seemed to know anything about it. After much discussion the issue of the women's freedom of speech was eventually "resolved" by a ruling which stated that women could not put up any posters which advertised "issues."

"We were just getting to know each other pretty well and they (the administration and staff) saw that they couldn't force us to do anything," explained one of the women. "We really questioned this [policy]. Something was going on and we wanted to know what it was." The mood at the site had drastically changed. The tension was pin-pointed and threats by the instructors were now common fare during classes.

After this incident, those women who challenged the decision found that their evaluations took a sharp turn downwards, and they decided to investigate filing grievances. In addition to the evaluations in question, the women reported that the instructors refused to discuss their work with them.

Through continual questioning and pressure, the carpentry instructor finally agreed to change the evaluations. The women soon discovered, however, that the changes were not recorded. Following the day of that discovery, the trainees heard, by word

of mouth, that the instructor had resigned, leaving them no recourse on their evaluations.

The women began to seriously investigate the grievance procedure as they suspected that they were being incorrectly advised. On that same day, July 26th, the two remaining instructors went to Yesterday's, a bar near the training site, for their lunch break. Several women approached the project director and asked her what was going on. The director reportedly began yelling at the women, stating that they had "screwed themselves" and that the carpentry instructor had quit because of them.

The women were then left without any supervision on the site for over an hour. The bricklaying instructor was the first to return. One woman claims that as he passed by her she detected a strong smell of alcohol. Others state that they noticed the instructor having visible trouble walking and that he seemed "quite upset."

A tense discussion began between the instructor and the trainees. At one point, the instructor demanded that one of the women get out of the building, calling her foul and racist names. He then began to lunge at her physically. The women claim that he began pushing this woman against the wall. Two women attempted to pull him off but he went right back after her. During the second attack, it was reported that he yelled at the woman, calling her a "Black bitch," and repeatedly threatening to kill her. The man, weighing over 225 pounds, was eventually restrained and the police were called.

After the attack, several women went into the administrator's office, and stated that they wanted to make a formal complaint. The director assured them that their grievances would be filed.

The following day the project director from Boston and the on-site administrator began to interview the women individually. Although this seemed at first to be part of the grievance procedure, the women soon realized that a group meeting was essential.

## Abortion Update

Since the Massachusetts State Legislature is on vacation and the U.S. Supreme Court will not convene until October, there is no new legislative news on the abortion issue. The Western Mass. Abortion Action Coalition main project right now is planning for Abortion Rights Action Week, October 22-29.

Abortion Rights Action Week is a national effort being organized by the National Coordinating Office in New York. It is a series of local events which was initiated by over 50 sponsoring organizations. We have decided to sponsor the week in Western Mass., and will loosely follow the calendar suggested by the National Office. The events will range from vigils to workshops, films, and speak-outs. It will be an opportunity for people to come together in support of our reproductive rights and our commitment to strengthen them.

These rights include the right to safe legal abortion, protection from sterilization abuse, access to and education about safe, effective contraception and to comprehensive sex education.

Western Mass. AAC will be working with other groups who are already involved with social and political issues and with direct social services. There are many connections to be made between abortion and other issues affecting women. We see this week as a time of sharing as much as a time of protest. Therefore, a steering committee is being formed with other groups and individuals. If you are interested in joining with us to organize the week, we welcome your energy, ideas and help. Contact Terri at 584-3150.

Julia Freedgood  
Western Mass. Abortion Action  
Coalition

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# News Briefs

## King on Trial in Women's Street Court

Massachusetts Governor Edward J. King was convicted of rape on July 27 by the Women's Street Court, which convened on the Boston Common across from the State House. Judge Rona Rothman of the Wages for Housework Committee presided.

Prosecuting attorney Mary Hawryshkiw, representing the women of the Commonwealth, charged King with "rape, conspiracy to rape and perpetrate violence against women, and upholding men's power over women in order to uphold their own power over everyone." Many women from different communities were called upon to testify against King, and the crowd of 150 acted as jury.

A summons delivered to King's office charged that the policies and legislation which he has supported have placed women in situations where they are vulnerable to rape. Examples included welfare cutbacks, the curtailment of abortion rights, increased difficulty in battered women receiving welfare benefits, and King's firing of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women.

Women from the Rape Action Project (RAP) discussed the occurrence of rape in marriage, and Lee Lynn Pierce, an ex-prostitute active in the Prostitutes' Union of Massachusetts (PUMA) discussed the night walking law, which states that any woman walking alone at night unaccompanied by a man can be arrested for prostitution.

Lesbians United for Non-Nuclear Action (LUNA) and Mothers' Coalition Against Nuclear Power charged King with rape by nuclear power.

The women then spoke to Peter McCarthy, Legislative Aide to King, and demanded recognition of rape in marriage as a crime, financial recompensation for all costs resulting from rape, repeal of the night walking law, and financial independence for all women.

## Mass. Inmates Denied Abortion

The American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts has filed suit challenging the state's right to deny an abortion to a pregnant prisoner. The suit is the first of its kind in the country.

The Correction Department's policy had been to pay for abortions for pregnant inmates, but recently requests have been held up because of the anti-abortion position of Governor Edward J. King. In the meantime, King signed a bill banning the use of state funds for abortions for welfare recipients, prisoners, and state, county

and municipal employees. Under the new policy, pregnant women prisoners will have to bear children they may not want, only to have them placed in the custody of the Welfare Department if they can make no other arrangements. A temporary restraining order is being sought requiring the state to provide abortions for prisoners. The suit by ACLU will also challenge the law.

## Lesbian Mother Victory

A divided Trenton, New Jersey appeals court ruled this month that custody of two children be given to their lesbian mother. The two girls, aged 11 and 15, had been living with their mother until 1976, when Superior Court Judge Philip Gruccio ruled that she was "unfit" because of her sexual and affectional preference.

The recent Appellate court ruling likened the case to a 1973 Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling which overturned a racist decision by a lower court that allowed children to be taken from mothers who entered into interracial marriages.

In January, another major victory for lesbian mothers and gay fathers occurred when the Michigan Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that had removed Margareth Miller's daughter from her because she was a lesbian. The case was won by the force of the lesbian and gay movement for civil rights and lesbian and gay parents in particular.

## Women Against Pornography

The pornography industry makes \$4 billion a year by producing, distributing, and selling images of women being bound, raped, tortured, mutilated, and murdered for sexual stimulation and pleasure. The message of these images is clear: that women are victims; that women enjoy being targets of sexual violence, hostility, and humiliation; that pain is erotic; and that brutality is a "turn-on."

Women Against Pornography, a group working out of a storefront in the heart of New York's porn district, has been attempting to dispel the myth that pornography is innocuous entertainment by conducting weekly tours for women through the book stores, peep shows, and sex emporiums that line 42nd St. For women, who hear of these things second or third hand but don't ordinarily confront them, the tours are a unique opportunity to witness and judge for ourselves the porn industry's treatment of women.

On Sept. 15 and 16 an East Coast Feminist Conference organized by Women

Against Pornography will be held at Martin Luther King Jr. School in New York City (65th St. and Amsterdam Ave.—Lincoln Center area). Workshops, information and strategy-sharing, panels, a slide show, films, lawyers speaking on the first amendment,



graphic by Stacey Styles

consciousness-raising sessions, open mike, and a speak-out by women who have been involved in the porn industry will attempt to convey to participants the dangers pornography poses for women and the fallacy inherent in naming it a harmless diversion. On October 20 a massive March Against Pornography, in which 20,000 women and men from all over the country are expected to participate, will be held in Times Square, the Pornography Capital of the World. These are considered east coast projects, and organizers are eager to have people come down from New England to participate.

For information on all events, contact Women Against Pornography, 579 9th Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10036, or call 212-594-2801.

## Courts Open Way for DES Class Action

Thousands of Massachusetts women whose mothers took the cancer-linked drug DES during pregnancy can now join a class action suit in a multi-million dollar action against six drug companies.

Judge Walter J. Skinner, who delivered this ruling, said that mass marketing of potent drugs has forced the courts to either adapt "traditional methods to the recurrent phenomenon of widespread drug litigation," or leave "large numbers of people without a practical means of redress."

The drug DES, or diethylstilbestrol, was prescribed between 1947 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage, and has been associated with vaginal and cervical cancer in the daughters of women who took the drug. The plaintiffs claim the firms manufactured the drug without adequate testing or warning of its potential dangers.

Under Skinner's ruling, women can join the class action if they are healthy, native Massachusetts daughters who were exposed to DES while their mothers were pregnant and living in the Bay state. These daughters must also be residents of Massachusetts when they receive notice of the judge's action.

Women who wish to join the suit should contact Rosenberg, Baker & Fine of Cambridge. Plaintiffs in the suit estimate that there are 13,000 to 53,000 DES daughters currently residing in the state.

Skinner still must decide whether the statute of limitations applies to the first three years after the mother takes DES or after the daughter discovers a condition related to the drug.

## Battered Woman Convicted

Bernadette Powell, a 27 year old black woman, was sentenced on June 29th to a 15 year to life prison term by Judge Bruce Dean in Ithaca, New York. Powell had been convicted of murder in connection with the death of her ex-husband, Herman Smith. The defense had attempted to establish that Bernadette had acted in self-defense; that the physical abuse she had suffered at the hands of her husband during their six year marriage was such that she had every reason to fear for her life on the night Smith forced her to accompany him in his car, threatening her with death if she refused. In Bernadette's attempt to get a gun away from Smith, he was accidentally shot. District Attorney Joseph Joch, whose wife, only a few weeks before, had won a divorce on grounds of cruel and abusive treatment because of frequent beatings, contended that Bernadette was a masochist who enjoyed the abuse her husband gave her.

Daniel Alterman, Bernadette's new attorney, has asked the judge to grant a hearing to determine whether the verdict should be set aside. If Bernadette wins an appeal, over \$10,000 in legal fees will be needed in the coming months. The Bernadette Powell Defense Committee is asking all women who know that women do not enjoy being beaten, who know that sometimes a woman's only option seems to be to try to make a bad marriage better, to contribute to help cover legal expenses. Please contact the Bernadette Powell Defense Committee, P.O. Box 164, Ithaca, New York 14850.

### OUR APOLOGIES!

The names of the women who wrote the "Lesbian Lives, Lesbian Loves" article are spelled Lore Dettenber, and Angela Giudice. We know how important it is that women get recognition for their work!

The correct order for Christine Hopkins' photographs was Shelly, The Channel, Self Portrait, Idle Hours, Devonshire, England, and Lisa. Also, due to a mix-up, the layout of the page was designed by the VWV staff, rather than by Christine herself.

### PHOTOGRAPHERS!

### GRAPHIC ARTISTS!

We need your help. If you would like to contribute, please call the VWV office, 545-0883, Tuesday and Thursday mornings and ask for Marcia.

## Collective Statement

The Valley Women's Voice is founded on the principles of feminist advocacy journalism. We are committed to providing a forum for all women to discuss ideas, publicize women's resources and events, and celebrate our heritage, as well as advocating social change. As a collective, we aim towards exploring a non-hierarchical structure while also recognizing leadership skills of individuals within the group.

We welcome work from all women writers, artists, and poets. Material that we feel to be racist, sexist or homophobic won't be published. Articles should have a definite connection to women's issues, and/or a feminist analysis. We particularly welcome coverage on lesbian, Third World, and poor women's issues. Due to space limitations, articles that are six typewritten doublespaced pages and under can more easily be considered.

CALENDAR deadline is September 15. All listings for calendar or announcement sections are free. For more info call 545-0883.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the October issue is SEPTEMBER 15. Please try to keep your articles under 5 pages, and double space all submissions. If you want your article or graphic returned, enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope. We do not guarantee that we will print all submissions; this decision is made by all members on the Editorial Taskgroup at the end of each month. Due to space limitations, we sometimes have to postpone the inclusion of articles. We will hold un-published articles up to three months before returning them. We also reserve the right to make small editorial changes without consulting the author, but will work with the author for any large changes. Any questions concerning articles, or article ideas, call the VWV office, 545-0883, Tues & Thurs. mornings and ask for Marcia.

### STAFF

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# The Common Woman Keeps the Pot Boiling

By Maureen Carney

The Common Woman Club is that rare example of a surviving women's business. For almost three years now, this membership club has been providing a vegetarian food service and innumerable functions for women in the community. Despite this phenomenal survival, hers is the story of constant struggle.

This white building, located at 78 Masonic St., Northampton, was purchased in 1976 by nine area women intending to establish a space for women to dine, converse, and share skills with each other. Men would not be allowed. In the three years since, it has remained the only all women's space in the area.

The collective structure for management is perhaps one of the oldest in the Valley. There has been a complete turnover of the original collective members, but the commitment to the policy of decision by consensus remains. With her eight collective members sharing skills in cooking, book-keeping, menu planning, food ordering, fundraising, community organizing, and fine arts production, the Common Woman defies popular criticism of collective management.

Collective members are presently engaged in small scale renovation. They hope the costs can be met with the upcoming busy season. The Fall reopening will reveal a newly decorated dining room complete with a menu of hot dinners, salads, soups and desserts, all foods prepared daily in the Club's kitchen. Each month a new art exhibit is on display at the Common Woman, giving area women a place for their work to be seen. Sunday nights, a guest cook shares her own recipes with prepared specialties, followed by some cultural event, ranging in the past from musical productions, to poetry readings, to workshops on healing, massage, self-help, tax resistance, drug and alcohol addiction, iris diagnosis, the Valley her-story, as well as open discussion for area lesbians.

However, the continuation of this kind of service depends on consistent patronage by women. Seasonal slumps in business, overhead, upkeep of the building, and all the expenses of any small business demand that the wages of the workers be barely a subsistence recompense. Without annual dues, determined by each member herself, donations, and most importantly, a regular clientele, the Common Woman faces fiscal exhaustion. The summer discos at the Polish-American club were benefits or the Common Woman to help keep the club alive.

As a drop in and poster space for women, the Common Woman offers notices for housing, jobs and events. Women may read and borrow books from the library, as well as reserve the space for small meetings.

The Common Woman is planning to co-produce a large scale production in the area of Women Performers not determined as of yet. In the past the Common Woman produced a Hilla Sousa Concert at Smith College, and provided an open reception after the Varied Voices of Black Women Concert held at the University of Massachusetts.

The fact that the Common Woman has survived suggests that she will and should continue providing extant services while developing plans to meet the needs of the women she serves. A substantial lesbian community, making its home in the Pioneer Valley, has been the provenance of notable feminist activism. The Common Woman, a place for ALL women, provides quiet, comfortable dinners, as well as the space and energy to serve the political needs of the community.

The Common Woman is open Tues. through Sun. for dinner from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Sunday brunch is from 11:00-2:00. Common Woman also caters your party or function. For further information about the Common Woman call 584-4580 or drop in at the Club.



photo by Kathryn Kirk

Common Woman Collective (Clockwise from top left): Marjorie Childers, Kyneret Goldsmith, Arlo Marvan, Pat Murray, Alison Reddy, Maureen Carney, Marielizabeth Le Blonde, Leslie Schwalm.

## Letters to the Collective

We welcome comments, criticisms, opinions from our readers, so please write! Due to space limitations, we sometimes have to edit LETTERS to fit everything in.

To the Editor:

I was very pleased to see the article on the "Anti-Nuclear Vigils" in the August *Valley Women's Voice*. I have told many people—writers and reporters—about the history of the peace movement and women's movement, but your interpretation is the most accurate I have seen. Thank you.

Frances Crowe  
Northampton

To the Editor:

Congratulations and many thanks to Michealann for putting forth so frankly

and accurately a valid view of sexuality which, though old as time, is new in the voice of the "liberated" sisters one currently hears spouting on the subject. Abstinence (which seems to me a better word than celibacy, the latter having connotations of permanence the former does not) is a choice that never seems to be considered these days when "sexually liberated" has become almost a synonym for "promiscuous." If one is learning and growing through repeated casual sexual encounters, then as long as no one's getting hurt (and I have my doubts that's possible), one should certainly continue. But the alternative ought to be at least considered in which one dispenses with specifically sexual activity for however long it takes to learn to meet people of either sex on different terms; to come to know them in places where sex would constitute an intrusion or at least a distraction. There is a chance then that love, having been waited for patiently, and judged (and so defined), and only then embraced, will again become something good and precious in itself, rather than just another way of "getting yours."

I'm not being, would have no business being, self-righteous. I'm just discovering, and think maybe Michealann's article is a sign that others are too, that there's a certain amount of wisdom perhaps in some of the old conventions we've been ignoring or deriding.

Verdandi  
So. Hadley

To the Editor,

In her article on forced sterilization, Suman Bohm says that there has been a myth created by powerful groups, such as the U.S. government, that there is a population explosion threatening the world. Maybe explosion isn't the right word, but I believe population growth is a mounting pressure making the world's problems more difficult to handle. Ms. Bohm says that, "The reason for this, it is said, is that the

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# Lesbians Organize

## National March

By Marcia Black

On October 14 there will be a National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Women and men have been organizing since February, on both the state and national levels. In March, a conference was held where National Demands were formulated, and the organizational groundwork laid. Lesbian/feminists made themselves heard at this conference, and it was resolved to have 50% lesbian representation and 20% Third World representation at all subsequent conferences and at the March itself.

In May, the Massachusetts Coalition elected delegates to the Houston conference, held in July, discussed the National Demands, and came up with more of their own:

### National Demands;

An end to all social, economic, judicial, and legislative oppression of lesbian and gay people.

- Repeal all anti-lesbian/gay laws.
- Pass a comprehensive lesbian/gay rights bill in Congress.
- Issue a presidential executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal government, the military, and federally-contracted private employment.
- End discrimination in lesbian mother and gay father custody cases.
- Protect lesbian and gay youth from any laws which are used to discriminate against, oppress, and/or harass them in their homes, schools, jobs and social environments.

### Additional Massachusetts Demands

An end to the rape, battering, and murder of all women—lesbian and non-lesbian—gay men, Black and Third World people, and children, and to the conditions which give rise to these attacks.

Immediate implementation of the "Women, Welfare, and Poverty" resolution passed by the National Women's Conference in Houston, Nov. 1977 which called for an increase in all assistance programs and an end to any cut-backs in welfare.

Safe, legal abortion available for all women who want them, state-funding of abortion for women who can not afford to pay for them, an end to sterilization abuse, and free access to birth control information and devices to those who want them.

Jobs at a livable wage available to all women—lesbian and non-lesbian—gay men,

## A Brief History

By Marcia Black

On June 28, 1969, riots erupted between gay men and police at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street, Greenwich Village, New York. For one of the first times in known American history, the men did not swallow their rage at being harassed but instead resisted the verbal and physical violence which historically had been directed against them. Barricades were constructed, bonfires flared, and for three days hundreds of gay men and lesbians demonstrated their refusal to answer oppression with invisibility, silence, and self-denial.

Many people think of the Stonewall Rebellion as the beginning of the "gay" movement in America. "Gay" Liberation Marches yearly commemorate the Stonewall Rebellion, and this year the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights celebrates the 10th anniversary, insuring that we remember and build on our history of resistance.

Black and Third World People, and youth who wish to work; recognition that women who work full-time in the home are employed and should be financially compensated for their work, and unemployment benefits for all who are unable to find paid employment.

Ratification of the ERA.

Affirmative Action legislation be used to open more and better paying jobs for all people, particularly women—lesbian and non-lesbian—gay men, and Black and Third World people.

At the Houston conference, 50% of the participants were lesbians, and 27% were Third World. The lesbian caucus proposed that 10% of all money raised for transportation in each of the states go to Third World lesbians and poor lesbians who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend. The caucus also proposed that women lead the March, that all entertainment be non-sexist, non-racist, and non-ageist, and that no accommodations during the March be arranged in Virginia, which has not ratified the ERA. All the lesbian proposals were passed by the larger group of delegates. The demand for the repeal of the age-consent law (man/boy love) was defeated by the lesbians, who recognized that this law is one of the few that protects (on paper) young women from rape and incest.

The importance of lesbian participation and feminist principles was stressed at the conference. Quality childcare, all women transportation and accommodations were all accepted.

The Stonewall Rebellion was not, however, the beginning of our movement.

"The Daughters of Bilitis" (Bilitis: a lesbian poet reputed to have lived on Lesbos with Sappho), formed by eight lesbians in 1955, had been educating the public and meeting the needs of lesbians for over a decade. *The Ladder*, one of our first lesbian publications, carried news analysis, research, fiction, letters, and bibliographies. It helped spread the growing sense of a lesbian community, creating ties between lesbians who daily struggled with isolation. Libraries, book services, and public forums were started by the DOB. The DOB provided "the comradeship, the security, the humor and the warmth of group solidarity," in the words of Del Martin.

In 1962, the DOB began dialogue and confrontation with clergy, in efforts to change the church's view of "homosexuality." In 1970, members of the Gay Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation disrupted a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, to protest psychiatry's view of "gender deviance."

According to Del Martin, the DOB realized from the beginning that it was in the "self-interest of the Lesbian to interact and help shape policy for the homophile movement as a whole . . . that

whatever the policies of one organization, actions of others invariably affect the (whole) movement. . . ."

In the years that followed the 1969 Rebellion, lesbians struggled with the tearing conflicts and demands that arose between the Women's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement. To actively define oneself as a lesbian often meant losing the political and emotional support of women who had not yet recognized how deeply entrenched male attitudes were/are in all women. Woman-hate masqueraded as purity, and lesbians were once again expected to remain silent. Our lives were seen as a menace (a lavender menace), rather than as an essential and honest expression of woman's power and autonomy.

Rita Mae Brown, in her essay "Take A Lesbian to Lunch" describes her first encounter with Women's Liberation: a series of confrontations where the women "probed, poked and studied" until they finally deemed her safe, although needing careful surveillance. In the early '60s the word "lesbian" was still unutterable, and "women's liberation" was, for the most part, a middle-class alliance with the dominant (heterosexual) culture which demand-

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The lesbians who are involved in organizing the Massachusetts lesbian community feel that this is an opportunity to make our reality seen and heard. Many feel it is essential that we take a stand against the attacks from the New Right, and that we show the nation that "WE ARE EVERYWHERE." The organizers expect that over 100,000 people will be marching in October.

Western Massachusetts has just recently begun to organize. Over 20 women met on August 15 at the Common Women Club in Northampton, and formed into task-groups. More women need to get involved, so that as many lesbians can be reached as possible. If you want to work on specific

areas call the following women:  
TRANSPORTATION: Sue 625-6378  
PUBLICITY: Ceal 773-9354  
FUND-RAISING: Brook 584-5888 or Erin 584-3394  
OUTREACH: Michelle 774-3220

Child-care still needs to be organized, preferably by a lesbian mother. The fund-raising group, in particular, needs more women. Concerts, dances, and educational forums are planned. Accommodations in Washington are being planned by the Washington group, but the organizers need to begin to get an estimate of how many will be going from this region. Look for brochures and posters for more information!

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# Women and Work

## Driving a Bus

By Ann Dorman

Being in the area for the summer, I decided to work at the Transit Service. To my surprise, I realized I was one of three women driving on a regular basis.

It is not the actual job of driving where I experience most frustration. Usually any sexist remarks I encounter while driving are blatant enough so that they are simple to deal with verbally. It is the place of employment, and the other employees where I experience the most frustration. Because it is summertime and service is more relaxed, so is the manner in which employees relate to one another. The flirtation level is extremely high. There is competition for a woman's attention. There are remarks made about clothes and general appearances. What hurts a great deal is to see male friends behave in a more animated fashion around me in front of other employees. The friendliness is far more exaggerated at the job than on an interpersonal level where the affectedness doesn't occur.

But more trying than these things are all the subtleties of working at a job where men predominate. I see and talk with men all day long. It is the subtleties of working in this atmosphere which make me angry, and appear to make my feminism manifest itself on an emotional level. The subtleties most often seem impossible to articulate, which accounts for my frustration. I feel as if I am fighting battles constantly. At times the battles are clear, other times they are nebulous. At a job where the majority of the employees are men, the rules, regulations, and behavior are established and maintained by men. Because I have been outspoken at times, to some I have acquired a reputation of being a "bitch." Of course, "bitch" is a convenient term often directed at women to let them know they are stepping out of line. Flirtation is another effort to colonize women and keep them in line by relating to them on a sexual level which is socially acceptable.

What keeps me going is the satisfaction I derive from knowing that I am good at my job. The struggles seem worth it from this and other points of consideration. I refuse to be intimidated by my frustration, and I know that my very presence and outspokenness is in effect beneficial to others whether or not they or I realize it.

## A Union of Women & Men

By Mary

Today there are many women working in our community who are also mothers. For them, going "out" to work poses special problems, one of which is finding substitute childcare which provides loving care

and which they can afford. Yesterday's "working mother" often relied on her extended family for childcare. But today's trend is toward nuclear families operating independently of each other. Many husbands take a more active role in childcare; however, we are still a long way from a working world where men and women have equal earning capacity and can easily trade off the multiple duties of childcare and family support.

An increasing number of single mothers are going back to school and/or working to support themselves and their children. The demands of this lifestyle can be overwhelming. Finding ways to earn enough money to support a family is a huge, ongoing task, thwarted at many turns by a lack of high-paying jobs for women and by reluctance among employers to take their efforts and needs seriously. Since these women do not have anyone to share their childcare responsibilities, they accept the need to pay for childcare. In fact, most women feel it is a measure of independence and self-respect to pay someone who is willing to care for their children; otherwise, it would be a cancellation of the value they place on their motherhood. But reality does not always measure up to our ideals. Childcare services are often understaffed and too expensive. Options for the pre-school child are limited. Mothers who must leave infants are especially vulnerable.

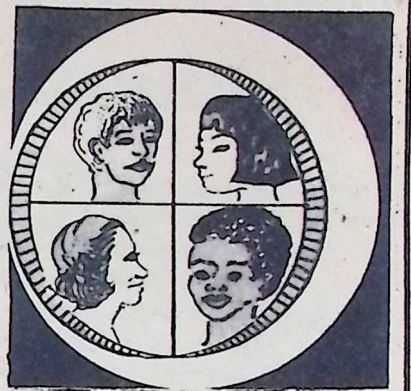
However, there is hope; I believe our hope lies in each other. Our needs as working mothers are not being met satisfactorily by a male-dominated social structure. This structure no longer even meets the demands of a working father who wishes to spend more time caring for his children and it never adequately met the demands of working fathers without wives. This structure must change. The answer lies partly in taking some initiative, in creating a union of people, women and men, mothers and fathers, singles and couples, to create more options for ourselves; we must stop waiting for professional childcare institutions to do what we can do for ourselves. We have a great bond: securing healthy, loving, nurturing care for our children without overpaying either money or time. And we have unlimited resources in the individual talents which we possess.

Some suggestions: creating more nursery school co-operatives in which the parent has active participation in the childcare based on the time individual members can contribute. We have a few now operating; we need more. Mothers of school-aged children can often find their needs met by responsible teenaged persons. (Don't overlook those boys; they are often willing if asked and capable and responsible when given the opportunity.) We will value our traditional "Teenaged babysitters" even more as they meet the increasing demand for affordable, dependable childcare.

More mothers are opening their homes and offering childcare to working mothers.

Share your thoughts, ideas and experiences for October's theme: What lesbianism means to me a) as a personal lifestyle; b) as a political commitment; c) as a lesbian; d) as a non-lesbian.

We would like to include as many viewpoints as possible on one page so please keep your submissions under 500 words (2 typed pages, double spaced). You don't need to be a writer to send us your views. Deadline: September 15.



**Womenspeak**

Some women have long recognized their potential to earn money this way; others of us are newly initiated. I enjoy the myriad aspects of caring for children; I have the need for more income yet the desire to stay at home and enjoy my own three children. For me and several other women

I know, the answer came as a pleasant surprise. There are other working mothers who value a homecare environment for their children, who feel good about leaving their children in the care of another mother with the added benefit of providing a playmate.

## Is Work Safe for Women?

By Donna Berry

—Eleven women at Bunker Hill Lead Smelter in Kellogg, Idaho are fired when they refuse pregnancy tests.

—Five fertile women at an Allied Chemical plant are laid off because they work with chemicals which the company believes might harm an unborn child if the women got pregnant.

—Under similar pressure five women at an American Cyanamid plant are sterilized to keep their jobs.

These are just a few incidents in the campaign of American industry to remove women of childbearing age from the workplace to protect their unborn and often unconceived children. The danger of toxic substances in the workplace affecting reproductive health is very real—some common industrial materials, such as lead, have been known for many years to cause abortions and sterility. The ill effects of other chemicals, such as anesthetic gases and pesticides (like Kepone) have been discovered only in the last few years.

If you listen to industry spokesmen (who say they are not trying to get rid of all women, only fertile women) you might think that only women's reproductive health is in danger. In fact, most substances which harm the fetus through the mother's exposure also have detrimental effects on male reproduction. The effects on men range from sterility and loss of sex drive to mutations which may result in miscarriages or birth defects.

But when a substance such as Kepone or DBCP (dibromochloropropane) has clearly documented effects on male reproduction, the substance has been banned. If the most obvious ill effects are on the mother's reproductive health, the "solu-

tion" is to get the women out of the workplace. Sometimes industry policy makes no sense at all: Borden Chemical Company bans fertile women from vinyl chloride operations, even though the best documented effects are on male reproduction.

We are all frightened by the spectre of a deformed or defective child. Most pregnant women have at least a few sleepless nights full of horrible fantasies. But industry is motivated by crasser considerations. They do not want to get sued, either by the woman or her child. Both paternity and causality are harder to prove when the only potentially dangerous exposure is to the father.

The solution is for reproductive health to be recognized as a human right, not dismissed as the "woman problem." In most cases, exposures to potentially harmful chemicals can be controlled so that both men and women can be protected. When a substance is particularly dangerous to the developing fetus and very difficult to control, pregnant women may be transferred, for the duration of their pregnancy, to less dangerous jobs with no loss of pay or seniority. In many European countries this right to transfer is well established. In this country, we are just beginning to fight for real protection on the job. It will cost a great deal of money to reduce workplace exposures and to provide alternative employment for pregnant women. To industry, it is an easy choice—the simplest and most economically feasible route is the exclusion of fertile women from the workplace. For women it is an impossible choice—poverty or fertility, our children's health or our own economic independence. In a truly sane society that dilemma would not exist.



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## Letter to My Younger Sisters

*I wrote this letter to read at a Women's Coffee House night at the Green River Cafe in Greenfield. That was almost the twenty-second anniversary of the first demonstration in which I ever participated—a vigil commemorating Hiroshima Day, on August 6, 1957, when I was seventeen years old, at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. I've been politically active ever since.*

Being on the cutting edge of history isn't easy.

Using one's life as a razor, continually widening the arc of space in which we can move.

My younger sister, you can't imagine where we've come from, where I've come from in the thirty-nine years since I was born, how much has changed in these last few decades.

How good it is to see you tuning up your cars, going back-packing alone, living together, speaking publicly, having nights like these.

We—women my age—often married young. I did.

Simone de Beauvoir was our lone visible option, and which of us at twenty could imagine herself alone into that austere face?

We revolutionary women of the late '50s and early '60s lived our daily lives much as other women did around us. In nuclear families. Dutifully. Dependently. Midwives to other lives. We may have read Marx and Brecht at the playground, but still . . . there we were at the playground, and the personal and the political hadn't a hope of glimpsing each other, it seemed.

How that decade of the '60s ripped open our hearts, and in the upheaval of our anger we were transformed as we began to transform world history. All of us in that wave of fire were changed and a new determination forged to fundamentally alter our notion of our relation to the world as women. We began to widen the space in which we lived. That widening of space meant, first, for virtually all of us, the end of our marriages, the clearest, most immediate confinement. And the beginning of struggle to create new lives with new forms for new content. We whose commitment to struggle was forged in the early civil rights battles brought the struggle home, and we set out then at twenty-five or thirty to recreate ourselves and history.

In 1965 I named my daughter Jody Simone, for Simone de Beauvoir who named that malaise which supposedly had no name—it was sexism—and in that naming she gave us power. We who have the word have speech can describe can change.

Simone de Beauvoir provided one of my earliest spaces, cracking the monolithic view of what a woman should be. Our stories had been so suppressed, and it is only in the last decade that we have general access to even a beginning of knowing who we have been and therefore are in our incredible diversity and even more incredible endurance. Simone de Beauvoir was one root but there are many from whom I now draw nourishment. Every woman who has started a printing press is a root, every woman who has written poems, gone back to school, every woman who sings a song here tonight is one of my roots in the earth of this land on which I have fought so hard to maintain myself.

I tell you these things, from my past and my roots because I am part of your strength and your roots; I am your own most recent history. And I tell you because in that telling my heart seeks your hearts, and I too draw my strength from connecting not only with women of the past who have struggled but with those of you who are setting out further along the road than I did. My roots are watered by your tears as well as my own.

This long process in which I and you have our parts—this long struggle to become whole, to continue to love across the chasms that our history has driven between us—in the anguish of this struggle at recreation I turn to my sisters for sustenance. We transitional people have a great historical task. None of us individually can move beyond the possibilities which our age generates for us, but we have the strength of our solidarity as well as the integrity of our reconstructed solitudes. And I—and we—have solace in the knowledge that we are widening the scope of the possible for those sisters who come after us.

Sometimes still, it seems I've lived too long in the old regime. Unexpected old emotions ripple this much rippled heart and the arena in which I move seems suddenly, eternally the same—the struggle for ever deepening independence and self, and the definition of the parameters of that struggle merely clarify as I get older. But that, after all, is part of participating on the cutting edge of history, participating in the task of women of our age as we experiment with living the unknown.

And it is true that after all of these years, I am finally, in many ways, the woman I always wanted to become. Using oneself as a razor, cutting out new arcs of space in which we can move, may not be easy, but there is a reason we open our mouths to the future. We must change, or die. And the fruits of reconstruction, however dearly paid for, are sweet.

However hard our struggle now, we have the strength of knowing that in the last decade our fire has burned clean a space within most every woman on this planet. We have ignited each other. And that space provides within each of us a sanctuary and a base, a base for further struggle with the sure knowledge that we have dared, and we are indeed powerful.

Joan Lester  
August 5, 1979



## Tired of Wolf Whistles

It's the middle of the afternoon, my hips are not swaying in the least, I am being followed by a serious group of middle-aged joggers, and you are interrupting my train of significant thought. Which could be dangerous.

Let me get this straight: You are not whistling a few bars from the Brandenburg Concerto, right? Or warming up for the local Gilbert & Sullivan light opera extravaganza? Or calling your dog from the broom closet? Am I to assume from this nuance of sound, this perfect pitch, a somewhat personal, somehow sexual, intent?

Remember, you are not the king of the fork-lift operators, and I am no helpless lady. At the moment I am a magnate, the factory-owner who scatters industrial chimneys from Rhode Island to Salt Lake City Utah. I'm just keeping a low profile. No diamond stick-pin in my tie. Incognito.

In this disguise I could use you to create a new product. You have the potential for millions of whistles: plastic ones, wooden ones, endorsed by the Red Sox, exported to Spain, all duplicating your own unique sound with careful execution. I could build an empire! With everyone whistling,

who hears one man behind a warehouse? Who would remember that toneless tongue and grapefruit pucker? By the time I reach my car you are smudged into oblivion, or chewing on 27 frantic pencils while the rest of the world drives by, tooting horns with abandon, whistling away.

Dyan Sublett



Woodcut by Lynn Van Natta

*We will be devoting two full pages monthly to creative work by local women. Please send us your artwork, poetry, short fiction, or photography, along with a short biographical description.*

### Poem for Ellen

We talked of inner things,  
And you read the poems I wrote.  
We tramped through chaanging mornings;  
Took laughing days toward night.  
We'd only started to unravel  
Our mysterious dreams of time,  
When you became the poet  
And wrote an epitaph  
To sink into the granite  
Rising cold above your head.  
But no one would decipher it  
And give a meaning to your death.  
Instead it has obscured  
The meaning of your life.

It is good that you were here,  
To add your growth to mine.  
And I have grieved for you  
Through the changing of seasons;  
Have cried in the face of the sun  
Whose warmth was mocking laughter;  
Have added my falling tears  
To the last of Autumn's leaves,  
And my frozen heart  
To the winter earth.  
Now the year has done turning  
And I face Spring's rebirth.

I cannot satisfy this quest  
For the necessity of dying,  
Or the reason behind living;  
Perhaps it is only that we do.  
You did not choose to be conceived,  
Nor was all your life free choice,  
But dying you can call your own.  
And I can no longer mourn  
Your act of belonging to yourself.

Mary Ralph



Woodcut by Lynn Van Natta

Have you ever had the experience of discovering a truth, and then finding intolerable the lack of that truth in everyone else? As feminist women, we are harder on ourselves than anyone else could ever be, because only we can know where it really hurts. We know that our failure to meet our own standards is the greatest failure. We work on defining acceptable behavior for ourselves and other women, and often forget that in spite of our similarities, our standards have to be grounded in personal experience to be workable. We think we know where other women should be at, and reject and invalidate those who don't see things the way we do.

Yet now that I have had to question everything I've been taught about being a woman, I know less than ever about the nature of womanhood. What we are today is largely a reaction to, and in spite of, the sexist world around us. The most liberated among us is only liberated because she has been oppressed. We have only a sketchy idea of what we would be like as women, what our concerns would be and where our goals and creativity would be directed if we had never been stifled and deceived. As it is now, most of our energy goes into getting out from under.

I lived for several years in a simply-constructed, bent branch dwelling with a dirt floor. Friends from the city would visit and say, Oh, you are trying to live like the Indians. It was something that I could never presume to admit to. The parallel that my friends drew was based mostly on their perceived primitiveness of the Indian's lifestyle. But Indians never lived the way I did; I have no idea how they truly lived, or, more importantly, how they would be living now if their culture hadn't been interrupted 500 years ago. As women, we have thousands of years to wonder about—whatever has been free, holy and brave about us has mostly been repressed, leaving us with little to go on. Our heritage has to be recreated. The different facets of this recreation are myriad.

These days, being political is a role we have to wear in order to deal with the circumstances of our lives—circumstances that exist because of our repression. Being political probably has little to do with our undiscovered natural development as women, beyond the elements of courage and creativeness we put into it. A non-political woman may be one who has projected herself ahead to the times when politics has served its purpose, or she may be a woman just behind the times, putting all her energy into her own psyche so she can make a beginning. Must we all be on the same level at the same time? In our minds we know that there is room for just about every kind of woman in the world, but in our everyday lives we tend to value and cherish only the woman who is like us now.

A married woman burns with resentment at being told by her friend that she'll never really understand women's struggles because she has settled for "a good man." A woman with a child burns with resentment because she intuits from the movement that her concern for the survival of her race is not as primary a concern as her sisterhood. A lesbian woman burns with resentment because she's told her lifestyle threatens women's concerns "in general." A woman whose sexuality is still an open question burns with resentment at a lesbian concert when the performer announces that unless you make love with women, you will never understand women's struggles. What it really means is that she is different—must differences be divisive? All roads to understanding are different, but understanding and acceptance look the same when we arrive there.

What we have in common is the uniqueness of our female condition and how it manifests in our lives. We have to allow each other the freedom of our own lifestyles and philosophies, we have to be able to disagree with each other without negation. The consciousness, or lack of consciousness of any single woman will not greatly change the world, but to deny any woman the right to her own interpretation of her experiences is to make our world smaller. The less we accept, the more we are diminished. Our women's world is as large as all the women in it, and our hearts can be just as large.

Michaelann

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# Discrimination

Continued from Page 1

A group meeting was arranged and several women were concerned that the brick-laying instructor who had made the attack was still on the site. "They told us it was none of our business, that he no longer worked here," explained one of the women. Women asked whether he was terminated or resigned, and no one answered. The administration also refused to acknowledge that the instructor had attacked one of the women.

The following week, the woman who was attacked was given a verbal warning about her "bad attitude" and her failure to use the proper channels for her complaints. The women were told that they were "starting all over again," although questions about the evaluations remained unresolved.

Later that week, after hearing another racist comment made by one of the instructors, this same woman again made a protest. The next day she was handed a termination notice. Four other women, who had challenged the firing, were placed on probation for "inappropriate behavior" and poor attendance.

When questioned about the firing, the administration refused to explain their actions. Several women began to go outside of the agency to investigate their rights and to determine the proper channels for grievances, since, as they explain, no one had ever given them accurate information.

During this highly electrified day a major confrontation occurred between one of the trainees placed on probation. Eleven of the 20 project participants then agreed to join in a protest against the program.

At the beginning of the next week the site was closed down without any notification or explanation. Women involved in the protest began picketing the site, initiated legal proceedings, and filed formal grievances and complaints.

The filed grievance detailed their dissatisfaction, and requests investigation and action in the following areas: the lock-out of participants without notification; racism in the treatment and firing of one of the trainees and irresponsibility by the administration concerning the attack; various threats against participants; retributive and vengeful actions against women expressing their values on various internal issues; prevention of access to files; and breach of "good faith."

In addition, the women have begun to share stories, and realized that they have been incorrectly trained and subjected to unsafe working conditions. This includes

work on scaffolding which was poorly constructed and dangerous to mount.

After the first week of protest and a continuation of the lock-out without explanation, the women were requested to attend individual interviews on Friday August 10, without legal counsel being present. The women agreed, after consulting their lawyers. Culminating these interviews, the four women who had previously placed on probation were handed termination notices.

The women filed an injunction to prevent the firings, but the injunction was denied. However, they are continuing with legal proceedings, and have filed grievances with the WICP, CETA, and the Mass. Commission Against Discrimination. They are also considering filing suit against WICP.

Mary Beth Phair, the project administrator in Florence, has consistently refused to make any statements regarding the incidents at the project and the grievances filed by the women in the project. She did state, though, that the goal of the program was to serve as an employment and training site. She claims that the women protesting the program have "ulterior motives." She also stated, in reference to the program's flexibility and receptiveness towards criticism that, "There are appropriate ways to express dissatisfaction. There may in fact be situations where

stituted. She also conceded that other WICP have had similar problems as the ones that have plagued the local site. The women protesting the program have begun to investigate problems at the other sites more closely.

The WICP administration has maintained that they do not run a racist or sexist program. However, the women involved in this protest differ with that assertion. "Sure, they may say the program isn't racist or sexist, but look at who's running it and what they've done to it," complained one woman.

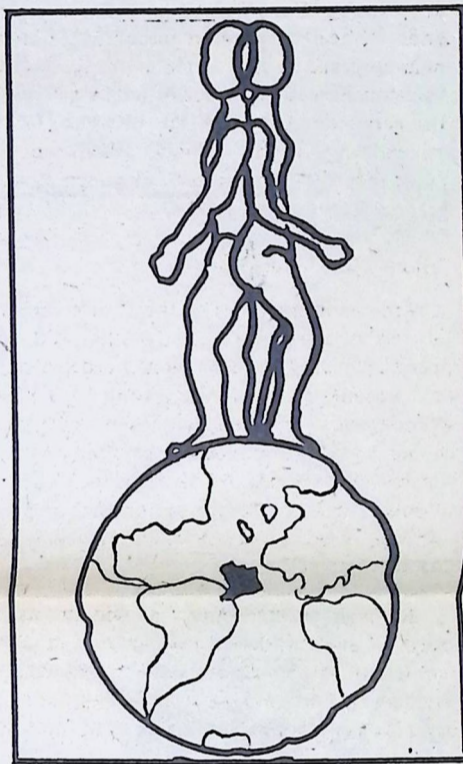
The WICP, intended to open up the construction trades to women, may in fact be providing some of that training. However, according to women involved in the project it seems as if the program has certain women in mind. One woman, who up until the time that the picketing began, did not consider herself to be concerned with political issues, commented on some of the changes she has gone through: "If getting into a job means that I have to keep my mouth shut, well then that's for the birds. I'm not going to sit around and say nothing when I think something's wrong and that's why we're being punished and treated this way—because we stood up for something that we thought was wrong."

The solidarity that the women have begun to develop has helped form a cohesiveness among a very diverse group of women. Repeatedly, when baited with questions about lesbians and accused of being trouble-makers, many of the women have stated that they want to work together and that these attempts to divide them only helped them feel united.

The protest of the WICP raises several serious questions for everyone in this Valley. One of the major ironies of the program, pointed out by participants, is that the training is intended to filter women into unions and yet the administration has ignored any attempts to negotiate and resolve disagreements through collective bargaining.

If in fact women are to have access to construction jobs, does this mean all women, or only women who display compliant and "appropriate" behavior—behavior which is still vaguely defined and, perhaps, based upon conventional criteria favoring white, middle-class women?

"We want to work," was a refrain repeated over and over again during the pickets. At what price? may be the next question.



they don't get the answer they want."

Phair went on to say that the program is being evaluated and that certain changes may in fact be implemented. She stressed that minority hiring was a priority and that an intensive recruiting program will be in-

The Women (out of) Construction need a lot of money for lawyer's fees. Donations can be sent to W.I.C., POBox 745, Northampton, MA 01060.

# History

Continued from Page 4

ed woman's betrayal of woman. Hostile, threatened, accusatory women tried repeatedly to quell the lesbian who spoke from a deeply rooted sensibility and commitment to women. The homophobia of the women's movement was clearly demonstrated by the lesbian purge that occurred at N.O.W. during the winter of 1970-71.

Being part of the Gay Liberation Movement, however, also seemed to require emotional and psychic suffocation, the forfeiting of one's own needs in order to find the legitimation and support of a community. Although the Daughters of Bilitis had been struggling for a decade and a half to work cooperatively with male homosexual organizations, male homosexual issues were often irrelevant, if not oppressive, to women.

In 1970, at the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations in San Francisco, seven lesbians disrupted the proceedings to confront the gay men on

their insensitivity to the reality of lesbian's lives. Lesbians recognized that issues of health care, sexual harassment, and violence against women affected them deeply as women and as lesbians. These issues remained invisible within the male gay movement, which often mimicked patriarchal cultural attitudes. Issues of the illegality of female impersonators, man/boy love, etc. which concerned part of the male movement (though not all) mocked lesbian reality. Society's generalized category and treatment of "homosexuals" without regard to gender distinctions forced an alliance with the male "gay" movement; the recognition of woman-hatred in all men, without regard to sexual preference, necessitated the autonomy of lesbian-defined and organized groups.

As more women came to define themselves as lesbian/feminists, the contradictions of marching in a Gay Pride March with men seemed too severe. Yet the need for building a new alliance, on our terms, has become stronger, as the attack from the New Right has become more organized,

well-funded, and powerful. The media, churches, legislatures, and other male institutions have re-kindled the latent homophobia in most Americans. Police have begun harassing lesbians in bars, the most recent, publicized events have occurred in San Francisco and in Rochester, N.Y. Lesbians, as the most threatening force against patriarchal culture, will be targeted in the New Right's mounting campaign against "homosexuals."

Our strength now lies in the multitude of ways in which lesbians have learned to claim our own space. In the October March on Washington we will be marching in our own contingent at the front, as lesbians, not as "gays." We have also made our feminism heard throughout the organizing of the March, so that our demands, needs, and insights have been taken seriously. (See related article on the National March on Washington.)

Information for this article came from Del Martin, *Lesbian/Woman* and Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds., *Out of the Closets, Voices of Gay Liberation*.

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# Breast Cancer: A Woman's Issue

By Joanne Gravell

A woman related the moving story of her mother's breast cancer.\* Her mother visited the hometown physician who diagnosed the disease and recommended a radical mastectomy. Uncertain about accepting such an extensive form of surgery, the woman drove two hours to consult a doctor in a city medical center. He recommended less severe surgery. The hometown doctor, infuriated, phoned her husband in anger and wounded pride. How could she disrespect his judgment?

How many of our mothers would have had the knowledge or strength to do the same? How many would have had the money to pay the bills?

Breast cancer is a killer of women. It is the number one cause of death among women ages 39 to 44. Breast cancer can be detected through a simple, monthly practice of breast self-examination. Yet many women do not practice this healthy habit. Reasons vary—fear, embarrassment, forgetfulness. American women are taught to regard their breasts as sexual and touching them, even as a health practice, may seem erotic and be considered shameful. Some women dislike their breasts, regarding them as ugly, too large or too small. The less-than-wished-for breasts are ignored. Even so, 95% of all breast cancers are detected by women themselves, but often late, after the cancer has spread. If they had been practicing breast self-exam regularly, some of these women could have discovered the lump months earlier, when the cancer was smaller and survival rates are high. Though many women fear that all lumps are cancerous, actually 80% are benign, not cancerous.

Though there is limited information on causes of breast cancer, some research has found a lower amount occurring in populations where vegetarianism is common

and beef and other high fat meats are not frequently used. There seems to be a hereditary factor involved also; women who have sisters or mothers who have had the disease are at greater risk themselves. Confusion exists over misinformation about preventing breast cancer. Presently, no evidence has shown that not wearing a bra will cause breast cancer. Similarly, a trauma to the breast (such as being hit by a softball) may cause bruising and swelling but has not been linked to breast cancer.

To address the challenge of identifying breast cancer earlier, in 1973 the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute supported not an educational campaign, but a campaign of diagnostic screening using a sophisticated and expensive X-ray technique called mammography. Massive programs, initially free, were aimed at women. Yet X-rays can cause cancer and, in healthy women under 50, annual mammography may create more breast cancers than the number of women it saves by early detection. After pressure from scientists and the public, 1977 federal guidelines recommended that mammography only be performed on women over 50 or those women in high risk groups (about 10% of all women).

With mammography, there also exists the risk of false positives—a woman is diagnosed as having cancer when the disease is not present. In followup testing of 1,850 women who had been diagnosed as having cancer, tissue samples revealed that 66 did not have cancer and 22 samples were questionable. Most of these women had undergone unnecessary surgery including radical mastectomies.\*\*

Radical mastectomy, a widely used form of surgery for breast cancer, has also come under attack. It is the most extensive operation involving removal of the entire breast, underlying tissue and muscle

and sometimes the lymph nodes (thought to play a role in fighting infection). This surgery results in a higher post-operation complication rate and impaired arm and shoulder movement. Studies performed in Britain have found that the number of women surviving five years after having a radical mastectomy is no different than the survival rate of women with the same degree of cancer who have undergone a less extensive operation. Still, among some physicians, the radical mastectomy is the operation of choice for breast cancer.

As women, we must educate ourselves, our mothers and our sisters about these controversies. Political activity and public education are important in enforcing mammography guidelines and creating options for breast cancer surgery.

Yet, when faced with a diagnosis of breast cancer, women feel fear, sorrow and anger. These are all normal emotions for a woman who is in danger of losing a body part. However, these emotions are amplified by a male-dominated culture's insistence on equating women's breasts with femininity and womanhood. One survey showed that women viewed the loss of a breast as worse than the loss of any other body part—even eyes. These attitudes create difficulty for a woman in seeking information and making choices about breast surgery.

The medical system benefits by women's socialization to be passive, agreeable and trusting of authority. Women often find it especially difficult to be assertive in a medical setting. A woman's power and control over her own body is denied by medical practitioners who refuse to present options and who intimidate the woman from participating in decision-making about surgery and other medical procedures. The common end result, a compliant female patient, leaves the physician feeling unthreatened and reinforces the mystification of medicine.



Assertiveness on the part of the woman is one important way of regaining control over her body. But action cannot end effectively at the individual level. A critical examination of the medical system reveals that many women cannot afford adequate medical care. Medicaid will pay for a second opinion in the case of breast cancer but a woman must find a doctor willing to accept Medicaid clients and be able to pay for transportation to possibly distant medical clinics. Some low income women cannot afford medical insurance and, even if a woman has medical insurance, not all plans will pay for more than one medical opinion. Women in lower income groups and Third World women generally receive lower quality care, both medically and interpersonally.

The topic of breast cancer provides a vivid example of how the medical system treats women but similar effects could be shown for hysterectomy (surgical removal of the uterus), childbirth or other areas. Individually or collectively, as consumers of traditional Western medicine and innovators who seek or create alternative health care, women are discovering that our individual and social health is interconnected with every other aspect of our lives and struggles.

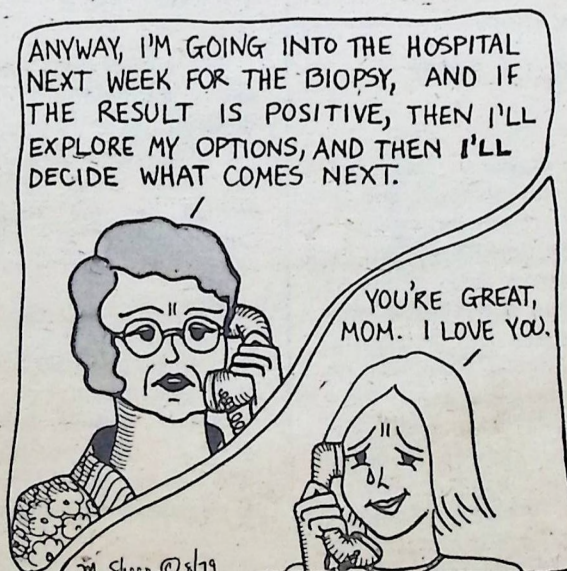
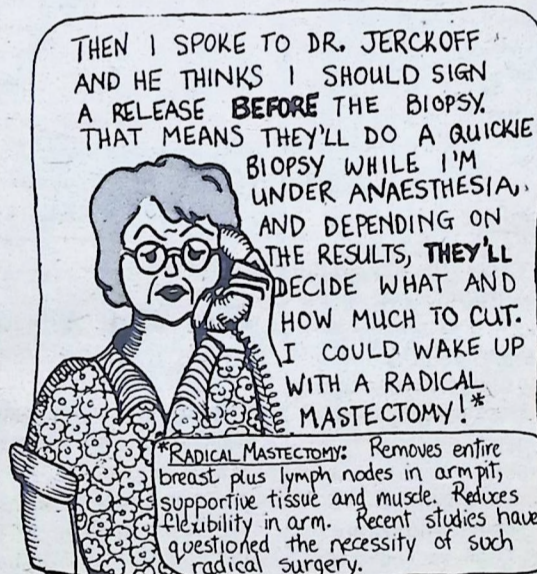
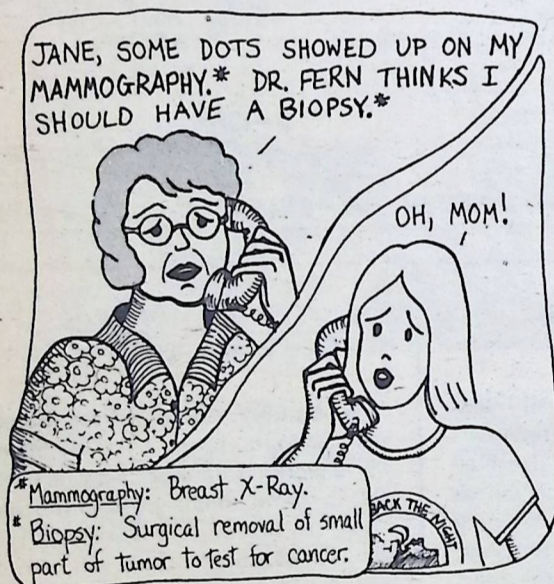
(Future articles in this health column will explore other issues and emphasize woman-controlled health care.)

\*related by Debbie, in the oral tradition. Thanks.

\*\*See also "X-rated Film: Mammography" Chrysalis. Fall, 1978.

## JANE

BY MYRIL SHEER



## Tuesday Sept. 4

**3RD WORLD THEATRE** Series begins with a free film, "History of the Black Theater Movement." Documentary with excerpts from works ranging from *Raisin in the Sun* to *For Colored Girls*. CC Auditorium, 7:30 p.m. For more info call 545-3604.

## Friday Sept. 7

**HOLLY NEAR** in concert, Weaver H.S., 415 Granby St., 8:00 p.m. Hartford. Tickets on sale at Womanfyre Bookstore and Valley Women's Martial Arts School. \$5, \$3 for fixed-income women, (Wendy Dragonfire will also be performing.)

## Saturday Sept. 8

**THE CHE LUMUMBA** School is having a tag sale on the Town Common. **NEW ENGLAND WIDE WORK CONFERENCE** for the Oct. 29 Wall St. Action to demand an end to Wall St. financing of nuclear technology. 10 a.m., Mt. Toby Friends Meeting House, Rte. 63, Leverett. For info: call Anna Gyorgy, 367-9505 or Cindy Leerer (603) 436-2982.

## Monday Sept. 10

**EVERY-WOMAN'S CTR.** Counselor/Advocate and new Educator/Advocates Against Violence Against Women information meeting

# Calendar

## Sunday Sept. 16

**WOMAN-CRAFT** evening with Jean-Janani Erlbaum at the Green River Cafe, 3 1/2 Osgood St., Greenfield. 7-9 p.m. Wear loose clothing, eat up to 1 hr. before. Bring fruit to share, pillows, blankets so you'll be comfortable.

## Wednesday Sept. 19

**NOW** General Meeting (Eastfield Mall Community Room, Boston Rd., Spfld.) Enter the Mall from the back entrance near Peerless. Speaker: Chapter member Maureen Solomon will speak on "ERA—Why We Must Join the Fight to Ratify America—And How To Do It." Maureen is one of 3 Massachusetts NOW members who are working on organizing the nationwide ratification effort. General Meetings are open to everyone interested in NOW and/or the program.

## Thurs-Saturday Sept. 27-29

**THE SECOND SEX:** Thirty Years After, a conference to be held in New York City. Contact Jessica Benjamin, NY Institute for the Humanities, New York University, 19 Univ.

## Fri-Saturday Sept. 28-29

**WOMEN FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE** in Massachusetts, a conference organized by Women in the Economy and 9 to 5. To be held in Boston. Speakers include Gloria Steinem, Jane Fonda, Ann Beaudry.

## Sat-Sunday Sept. 29-30

**THE DEVELOPING MINORITY** Woman Leadership, a regional conference for shelter providers, will be held at Stonehaven Inn, Springfield. Sponsored by the Domestic Violence Technical Assistance Project. For further info, call HERA, at 733-2561.

## Sunday Sept. 30

**HERBS AND THEIR USES**, with Beth Dichter, at the Green River Cafe, 3 1/2 Osgood St., Greenfield, 7-9 p.m. Bring fruit to share. **JANE FONDA** speaking in The Cage, Curry Hicks, UMass, at 8 p.m., sponsored by DVP

## Thursday Oct. 4

**MEG CHRISTIAN** in concert at Mt. Holyoke. Tickets available at Womanfyre.

## Competition Announced

The Center for Women Scholars in San Francisco is offering a prize of \$500 for the best article of not more than 5,000 words on solutions to the problems of the woman scholar.

"Problem" topics might include those that are personal and domestic as well as those that are job-related and/or social. The term, "scholar," as it is used in this competition, refers to a learned person, usually by virtue of advanced study in a specified field, who promotes knowledge in any discipline through research, teaching, and/or other investigative enterprises. Although, historically, the setting for the work and development of scholars has been the university, this competition is not limited to writers with academic affiliation.

The winning article will be published in the 1980 edition of *The Woman Scholar's Handbook: Strategies for Success*, a project of the CFWS. Additional articles may also be chosen for publication from those submitted and the writers of these will receive \$300 each.

The deadline for submission of manuscripts is December 31, 1979. It should be noted that those which are not approved for publication will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped packaging. Even so, return cannot be guaranteed. All manuscripts should be typed in black ink and double-spaced, on white, 8 1/2 x 11" bond paper.

Address submissions to Dr. Monika Kehoe, Editor, Center for Women Scholars, AMERICAS Behavioral Research Corporation, 300 Broadway, Suite 23, San Francisco, California 94133.

## Chrysalis Auditions

The Chrysalis Theatre Eclectic announces an open audition for its fall production, *The Enemy's Not On Safari Coming to Round Us Up in the Jungle No More* by Andrea Hairston. We need five Third World women, three of them over 35, and one Third World man. We are looking for people who can commit a serious amount of time to a collaborative process. Rehearsals will be September through November and performances will be in December and January. The audition will be held Tuesday, Sept. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the Chrysalis Workshop

# Announcements

Space, fourth floor rear, Fitzwilly's Building, Main Street, Northampton. Scripts are available at the Music and Art Department of Forbes Library, Northampton. If you have any questions, call 586-2262 or 256-8193.

## AFRC Changes Name

The board of directors of the Amherst Feminist Repertory Company has announced a change of name to Women's Community Theatre. The group, founded in 1975, performs original plays and musicals by local women.

Asked why the name change, Sarah Alleman, board member and writer, explained that AFRC no longer accurately describes the group. Cast and crew members are now from many towns in addition to Amherst. Also the term "feminist" has tended to keep away some women who otherwise might be interested in joining. Although feminist by virtue of the fact that all works are written and performed by women, the content of the plays is not always directly political. Also the group is not a closed company. Every play has included new performers with varying levels of experience and expertise.

"Women's Community Theatre is far more appropriate," says Alleman, "because it more clearly states who we are: a group for women from all walks of life from the area who share an interest in theatre."

## Everywoman's Center Taskgroup

Everywoman's Center at UMass/Amherst is looking for volunteers and interns to staff the drop-in and call-in resource and referral portion of EWC for fall semester. Interns and volunteers provide information about health concerns; political, social and survival resources; medical and legal referrals; do occasional crisis intervention; etc.

Credit is available for this work for most UMass undergraduate students.

For a job description and application form, contact Ruth Fessenden, Resource/Referral Coordinator, Everywoman's Center, Wilder Hall, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003 or call (413) 545-0883.

Deadline for applications for fall semester is September 14. Interviews will be held as applications are received, and resource/referral staffing begins the first week of October.

## Which is prettier?



FROM THE STANFORD-BINET INTELLIGENCE TEST USED IN 1979

With thanks to The Testing Digest, Spring, 1979

## Counselor/Advocate Training

Interviews and selection of new trainees for the EWC Counselor/Advocates and new Educator/Advocates Against Violence Against Women will be held on September 17 and 18. Training for both groups will begin on Monday, September 24 and continue throughout October.

C/A's learn crisis intervention counseling, and legal and medical advocacy skills for use in a 24-hour crisis counseling service for victims of sexual assault and other forms of violence against women in the Hampshire-Franklin County area.

New this year are the Educator/Advocates, who in addition to an overview of the above skills, will learn about group facilitation, public speaking and education around broader issues of violence, i.e., pornography, racism, heterosexism, etc., for use in community education and organizing work.

For more information, Call Everywoman's Center at 545-0883, and ask for Donna or Myra.

## Support Groups

Hampden County Women's Center will be offering support groups starting in September. Single parent, battered women, parents anonymous, others, and they will be happy to form new groups on request. Please call for more info: 739-4444.

## Working Women's Task Force

A Working Women's Task Force is just starting to form. If you are interested in working on working women's issues in the community and/or university (such as health and safety at work, sexual harassment on the job, sex, race and age discrimination, etc.), particularly as these issues relate to Third World women, lesbians, low income women, single parents or older women, please get in touch with Heather Johnson, Working Women's Task Force Coordinator, Everywoman's Center, at 545-0883. We are also looking for a Resource Assistant intern, 8 hrs./week to assemble self-help resource library on affirmative action, sex and race discrimination, occupational health and safety, rights on the job, etc., and to assist with liaison to university and community agencies/groups/unions etc. concerned with working women's issues. We are also looking for a Program assistant, 8 hours/week to assist in developing and presenting workshops to employed unemployed and underemployed women and enable them to acquire new skills and strengthen the ones they have.

# A Noncomprehensive Services Guide for Women in Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin Counties

## Hampshire

**AMHERST SURVIVAL CENTER**, N. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA 01002, 549-3968. Helps low-income people meet their survival needs: clothing, food, furniture, etc.

**CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY SERVICES**, 16 Center St., Northampton, 586-2602. 24 hour service, crisis intervention for families and children up to 18 yrs. Parent-child conflict, adolescent runaways, parents who are fearful of hurting their children, people who know of other parents who are abusing or neglecting their children.

**CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE SERVICES**, 1727 Northampton St., Holyoke, 532-9446. Provides counseling to the parents of abused and neglected children, with the goal of helping families to stay together, and assure care for their children. Free services.

**CIRCA**, A feminist counseling collective, 169 Main St., Northampton, MA, 586-6471. Individual and group counseling, sliding scale, 9-5 weekdays.

**COMMON WOMON CLUB**, 78 Masonic St., Northampton, MA 01060, 584-4580. A woman's restaurant that also sponsors cultural events. Call for hours.

**COUNSELOR/ADVOCATES AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**, Everywoman's Center, Wilder Hall, UMass, Amherst, 545-0800. Offers 24 hour crisis intervention, counseling, legal, and medical advocacy to women who are victims of sexual assault and other violence.

**EVERYWOMAN'S CENTER**, Wilder Hall, UMass, Amherst, 545-0883. Third World Women's Taskforce, Working Women's Taskforce, Poor Women's Taskforce, Taskforce Against Violence Against Women, Drop-In Resource and Referral Center. Provides counseling, resource, and referral.

**FAMILY PLANNING COUNCIL** of Western Massachusetts, 16 Center Street, Northampton, MA 01060, 586-2539. Counseling, referrals, complete family planning. M-F 9-5. Clinics M, T, W eves.

**HELP FOR CHILDREN**, Vernon St., Northampton, MA, 584-7970. Provides information, referrals, follow-up, advocacy. Assistance in health, welfare, day care, child abuse, foster care, etc. Services free and confidential.

**HOMEBIRTH, INC.**, 527-7740. Series of 8 classes on all aspects of pregnancy and natural childbirth. Can also help with referrals for birth attendants in the area.

**NECESSITIES/NECESSIDADES**, 19-R Hawley St., Northampton, MA 01060. 586-5066. Counseling, resource and referral, and shelter for battered women and their children.

**PARENTS ANONYMOUS**, 586-5293 evenings, 584-7970, day. Self help group for parents who are having difficulties dealing with their children. P.A. goal is to help prevent child abuse, recognizing that parents are often under stress.

**PIONEER VALLEY CHILDBIRTH ASSOC.**, 6 Mechanic St., Amherst, MA. 253-3680. L-maze, prepared childbirth classes.

**SOJOURN, INC.**, 142 Main St., Northampton, MA, 586-6807. Provides counseling, group work, case management/advocacy, life management classes, residential services for adolescent women in Hampshire County.

**VALLEY FEMINIST THERAPIST NETWORK**, c/o Carol Drexler, 1151 Southeast St., Amherst, MA 01002. 256-6159.

**WOMAN AND CHILDREN FIRST**, 27 Brewster Court, Northampton, 586-1371. A day treatment program for alcoholic women and their children, offering individual and group counseling, education on alcohol and alcoholism, nutrition counseling and planning, career counseling, child care, companion program for children, welfare and legal advocacy, transportation, and various workshops on self expression, survival skills, and relaxation.

## Hampden

**DECISIONAL TRAINING**, 559 Canon Circle, Spfld. 783-7933. Teaches decision-making skills to female and male inmates of Hampden, Hampshire & Franklin Counties. Counselors for women especially needed. For information on training sessions, contact Ann Bewsee at above number.

**DIGNITY**, P.O. Box 1604, 01101; 737-3207. A National organization initially for gay Catholics, all gays are now welcome. Offers a women's group with 2 meetings a month, newsletter with activities on request.

**FAMILY PLANNING COUNCIL** of Western Mass., 175 State St., Spfld. 733-6639. Non-profit agency providing 13 services in Western Mass. Medical services, counseling, pap smears, breast exams, VD testing, pregnancy testing, pelvic exams, contraception. Birth control counseling and complete physical given before contraception offered. Absolutely confidential, partner or friend invited to come, sliding scale, Medicaid accepted. Educational branch has speakers available. Northampton has film & book library, regional office has trainers & consultants to work with agencies & schools on human sexuality. No age requirement for services. Palmer office: 283-8311.

**GAY HOTLINE** 734-4962. Mondays & Wednesdays, 6-9 p.m. Volunteers needed.

**HAMPDEN COUNTY WOMEN'S CENTER**, 347 St. James Ave., Spfld. 739-4775, Hotline, 739-4444. Services and referrals for battered & abused women, temporary shelter, legal advocacy, welfare advocacy, Parents Anonymous. Starting in September: divorce counseling. Volunteers needed.

**HEART HOUSE**, Emergency crisis help for physically & emotionally battered women. Call HERA or Hampden County Women's Center for referral. 24 hour line of contact at 736-

2536. Volunteers needed for 6 p.m. to 9 a.m. commitment.

**HERA (Hotline to End Rape and Abuse)**. Office: 732-3121, 24 hour Hotline: 733-2561. Services to victims of rape and battering and their children. Support groups, legal advocacy, temporary shelter, comprehensive referrals, total confidentiality. HERA also offers speakers and trainers for agencies and civic groups to increase understanding of the issues surrounding rape and woman-battering.



**LeLECHE LEAGUE** Hotline: 733-2253, 24 hours. Provides breastfeeding information and encouragement.

**MY SISTER'S HOUSE**, 733-7891. A half-way house for alcoholic women 18 & up, with outpatient services & a 20 bed residential unit. Rap groups, assertiveness training, individual counseling, alcohol education. Provides medical, financial, vocational & psychological services. Fees on a sliding scale. 24 hour services.

**NOW (National Organization for Women)** 525-4023. Advocacy & legislative work with focus on ERA, abortion rights. Operates on local, state & national level. Groups in consciousness raising & women's history. Meeting held every 3rd Wednesday at the Community Room at Eastfield Mall. All women are welcome.

**PAGE PROGRAM**, Norma Baker, Page Director, 26 Howard St., YWCA, Spfld. 01105. 736-5434. Services for any pregnant teenager enrolled in the Spfld. School System. Counseling, referrals, health, nutrition; medical care, individual & group instruction in prepared childbirth, diet, hygiene, child care. Educational continuation programs operated jointly by the YWCA and Spfld School Dept.

**VALLEY WOMEN'S MARTIAL ARTS**, 284 Bridge St., Spfld. 732-8118. Karate and self-defense training for women and girls in a supportive atmosphere. 6-8 p.m., Monday through Friday, \$30 a month for women; Saturday 10-11:30 a.m. for girls 8 and up, \$10 a month.

**YWCA RAP (Runaway Program)**, 26 Howard St., Spfld., 736-0569. 30 day emergency shelter and counseling for runaway girls and girls who are removed from their homes be-

cause of physical or sexual abuse, ages 10-17. 24 hour, 7 day a week walk-ins and referrals. Donations desperately needed of dishes, utensils, furniture, paint, decorations.

## Franklin

**BEACON HOUSE FOR WOMEN**, 153 High St., Greenfield, 774-5378. Provides counseling and advocacy for alcoholic women within a residential program.

**CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY SERVICES**, 773-7710, 24 hour service for families and children in crisis.

**CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE SERVICES**, 317 Federal St., Greenfield, 773-3608. Provides counseling to the parents of abused and neglected children, with the goal of helping families to stay together and assure care for their children. If you have a problem with your children, or know of a family that needs help, call C.P.S.

**THE DROP-IN CENTER** at the Greenfield Youth Center, 86 Washinton Street, Greenfield, MA. 772-6201 or 774-2318. For parents who need child-care during the day while grocery shopping, for doctor's appointments, just for a few hours break. For children from birth-48 mo. M-W 9-11:30, Fri. 1:30-4.

**FAMILY PLANNING COUNCIL** of Western Mass., 31 Federal Street, Greenfield, 774-3834. Pregnancy testing, counseling, abortion referrals, women's health care.

**HEADSTART**, G Street, Box 148, Turners Falls, 774-2310, or Depot Rd., Wendell, (617) 544-7467. Pre-school program for 3-4 year olds and their families who are within U.S. HEW income guidelines. 3 days/wk., 9-1, Sept. through June. Breakfast and lunch provided, plus health assessments, recreation, field-trips, parental involvement.

**HELP FOR CHILDREN**, 278 Main St., Greenfield, 774-5311. Information and referral, children's advocacy.

**NELCOWIT**, 310 Main St., Greenfield, 773-0806. Help for women and children, with a special emphasis on battered women. Provides crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter, welfare, legal, and social service advocacy.

**PARENTS ANONYMOUS**, 739-4775, ask for Lynn Beaulieu. Self-help group for parents who are having difficulties dealing with their children. P.A. goal is to prevent child abuse, recognizing that parents are often under stress.

**WESTERN MASS. LEGAL SERVICES**, 278 Mai

**WESTERN MASS. LEGAL SERVICES**, 278 Main St., Greenfield, 774-3747.

**W.I.C., Women, Infants, and Children**, 239 Main St., Greenfield, 772-0683. Nutritional education and food packets for low-income women who are pregnant, post-partum up to six months, breast feeding mothers up to one year, infants, and children up to age five.

## CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Rates are \$3.00 for a 3 line minimum (at 40 characters per line). \$.30 for each additional line with a 10% discount for 3 months. Pre-payment required.

### instruction

**WRITING AS CREATIVE EXPRESSION**. An 8 week course for women. Through exercises in body awareness and movement explore your creative awareness, then transform these energies into expression through writing. Theatre games, storytelling, journal sharing and more. Open to all women. Class begins 9/25. For info and reg call Marty, 586-2807; 542-2181.

**THEATRE, MOVEMENT and Creativity**, a class for lesbian women. This is a ten-week workshop to help lesbians discover, explore, express and enjoy their creative selves. No previous experience necessary. Class begins week of October 1st, and a \$10 deposit will be required for registration. For more info call Iris Blume at 584-5888 and leave a message.

**MASSAGE AND MOVEMENT** for women. A 10-week class in the art of healing. Focuses on learning to know and heal your own body and using that knowledge to help heal others. Approach draws on many different disciplines with individual, dyadic and group work included. Only requirement is commitment to a 10-week process of self-exploration and discovery. Starts

Monday October 8. A \$10 deposit needed for registration. For more info and registration call Brook at 584-5888 and leave message.

**THE BICYCLE REPAIR COLLECTIVE** of Amherst is offering a series of classes on bicycle repair. The classes will cover tune-ups, overhauls, internal gears, wheel building, and truing. They will be held Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings from 10:30 to 12:30. The fee for each class is \$4 and they are open to the public. Class members will work on their own bikes, whether they have one, three, five, or ten speeds. Pre-registration is optional; however space is limited. To pre-register or for more detailed information, call or stop by The Bicycle Repair Collective, 51 South Prospect Street, Amherst, 256-6852.

### position open

**POSITION OPEN**: Clinical supervisor with feminist orientation for New England Learning Center for Women in Transition. Prior experience in individual and group work. 4 hours/wk. Send resume to Ellen Sedlis, NELCOWIT, 310 Main St., Greenfield, MA by August 31.

**HERA**, the Hotline to End Rape and Abuse in Springfield is seeking a full-time administrative coordinator with experience with women's issues, administrative and fund-raising skills, and a commitment to working collectively in a multi-cultural setting. Send resume and a writing sample to HERA, C/O WYCA, 26 Howard St., Springfield, MA 01105. \$9,000 per year.

### for sale

**TAG SALE** from lesbian household. Everything must go! Household goods, pottery, clothing, appliances, furniture . . . 28 Hatfield St., Northampton 586-1296. September 15, 16, 9-3.

### roommates

**WOMEN WANTED** for feminist household in Springfield. Quasi-vegetarian cuisine, 25+, children welcome. Rent and utilities about \$135 per month. 788-4679.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

As you may have noticed, we are now distributing free, so that we can make this paper available in more places and reach more women in the community. However, we are more dependent than ever on subscriptions to meet our publication costs—we need your support to go on existing, and we value it as your expression of participation in this venture. We could not survive financially (or emotionally as a collective) without you.

### CATCH IT!

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## Valley Women's Voice

A Western Massachusetts Feminist Monthly

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## A Feminist Utopia:

# Gilman's HERLAND

By Heather Johnson

*HERLAND: A Lost Feminist Utopia*

By Charlotte Perkins Gilman

New York: Pantheon Books

147 pp. \$8.95, paper \$2.95

A land where women live cooperatively yet each woman has two rooms of her own, where women engage in all types of work, where they wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing and sensible shoes, a land where women reproduce by parthenogenesis, where childrearing is an honored and specialized profession and children have no surnames, a land where disease has been eliminated by science and where technology serves society, where there is little respect for tradition but a lot of respect for the environment and for a woman's essential needs . . . this is the utopia Charlotte Perkins Gilman, socialist feminist, conceived back in 1915 in her witty book, *Herland*.

It is a tribute to her vision and a statement as to how little sex roles have changed that this book still is germane. Gilman tells her tale through the eyes of Van, a sociologist, one of three American men who set off by boat and bi-plane to discover a distant land, rumored to be inhabited only by women. Van's companions are Terry, a rich, macho ladies' man; and Jeff, a romantic, chivalrous, woman-worshipper. Their assumptions about the women in this land are continually proved wrong and this is the source of much of the wit in the book. When they arrive, they can't believe there are only women around—who could have produced the motor cars, built the houses, made the place so civilized? And, of course, the women are not all young, as they had fantasized.

At first they are taken captive—without violence, in a wonderful show of strength women have when united. They are tutored in Herland culture, history and language; in turn, they share information about the workings of the "bi-sexual"—Gilman's word for a society with both sexes—world. (Because of a volcanic eruption which killed most of the men of Herland—the remaining women revolted



Charlotte Perkins Gilman

and killed the rest—Herland had been isolated from the rest of the world for 2,000 years.) The women of Herland, in their ignorance, assume the natural superiority of "bi-sexual" society because of the enriching effect of having two sexes "to love and help one another."

Gilman plays with their naivete about the "bi-sexual" world in order to make some searing social comments:

... "The men do everything with us." He squared his broad shoulders and lifted his chest. "We do not allow our women to work. Women are loved—idolized—honored—kept in the home to care for the children."

"What is the 'home'?" asked Somel a little wistfully.

But Zava begged: "Tell me first, do no women work, really?"

"Why yes," Terry admitted. "Some have to, of the poorer sort."

"About how many—in your country?"

"About seven or eight million," said Jeff. . . . (P. 61)

The men, uncomfortable, of course, hold back a lot of information. The women of Herland decide the Americans should help change Herland back to a superior "bi-sexual" society. Van, Terry and Jeff fall in love and "marry"; their "wedding" is a

community celebration of that proposed change. But the women have no concept of marriage, wifehood, or possessive love—not to mention masculinity, femininity or even a concept of men as other than fathers (an interesting reversal). This makes for great tensions—Terry finally tries to rape his wife and is expelled from Herland. Van decides to accompany him back to America; Ellador, the woman who married him, chooses to go, too. (Their travels in America are the subject of a sequel, *With Her in Ourland*, which, like *Herland*, was serialized in *The Forerunner*, a publication that Gilman herself wrote and published for several years.) By the end of the book, Van, Jeff, and possibly Terry, come to see "women not as females, but as people; people of all sorts, doing every kind of work." They come to this awareness partly because of their own experience in being defined by their sex and not by their humanity and partly because of the strong, versatile and non-stereotypic women they have met.

But Gilman's vision is not entirely ideal; it reveals several disturbing attitudes: racism, homophobia, and a belief in eugenics. Herland citizens are all white—Aryan. And they are primarily asexual, their sexual desire having faded from 2,000 years of "disuse." Gilman appears to define sexuality as a result of the distinction between the sexes and their sex roles and so ignores the possibility of sexual feeling between women. When the three women of Herland marry the American visitors, heterosexual

sex is primarily considered a vehicle for procreation; abstinence is the method of contraception. Gilman thus frees women in Herland from sex role behavior but extinguishes their sexuality in the process.

Last, most Herland citizens are mothers. And there is a hierarchy of mothers—Overmothers, exceptional women who are allowed to bear more than one child; mothers, who bear one child (one child is the usual limit for population control reasons); and women who are not worthy enough to be allowed to bear children. Gilman tries to put value on Motherhood and this is good, since it has in actuality been devalued in spite of its mystique (and she has a wonderful plan for cooperative childrearing and education) but she fails at the same time to value women who choose not to be mothers. In fact, this is not even a possibility—all the women in Herland seem to want to be mothers; abortion is inconceivable. Gilman, then, keeps motherhood as part of the definition of being a woman—or at least, of a good woman. I cannot help but think, though, that Gilman would probably have dealt with these subjects more satisfactorily if she had been living today.

*Herland* is witty and easy to read. It unmasks the persisting sexism in our culture and at the same time engenders questions about what sort of society we are working toward, what sort of society we can or would like to create—and for that it is worth reading.

## Letters

Continued from Page 3

world's birth rate has become so high and yet if one looks closely, one sees that the existing facts are different." The world's birth and growth rate has declined but yet the amount of people we grow by each year is increasing. That is because the amount of people in their childbearing years is much larger than it's ever been and because birth rates are not yet as low as death rates.

While it may be true, as she says, that food production has been increasing faster than population growth, this may not be able to continue much longer. Agriculture today is highly dependent on petroleum for its high yield . . .

It is a shame that the U.S. government will not come out with a population policy of its own, while saying that the underdeveloped countries should do something about their population growth. We are the

world's most gluttonous consumers and should lead the way by stabilizing our own population while at the same time curbing our demand for the world's resources. The birth rate has dropped sharply in the U.S. in the past decades and Americans will probably continue to limit the size of their families. But even with a two child norm in the future our population would continue to grow. Because of our current age structure the U.S. will be facing a housing dilemma in the years ahead as the baby boom cohorts look for a place to call their own.

Ms. Bohm is right in fighting against racist and classist family planning programs that do not look at the real needs of the poor. It is important that family planning programs be carried out by those who wish to see the quality of life enhanced for all.

Cathy Rossi  
Wilbraham

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